

SEROPREVALENCE AND RISK FACTORS FOR TOXOCARIASIS IN PEOPLE OVER 50 YEARS OLD IN WESTERN SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

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Toxocariasis is a geohelminthiasis with worldwide seroprevalence estimated in 19%. The disease is caused by the nematoda *Toxocara canis* (of dogs) and *T. cati* (of cats). Although children have been considered more prone to infection, adults are also considered as being at risk. Despite the importance of toxocariasis, there is a scarcity regard to the investigation in people over 50 years old. The aim of this study was to evaluate the risk factors for seropositivity for *Toxocara* spp. in a population over 50 years old attended by the Public Health System in the West region of the São Paulo state. A total of 290 individuals were included in the study. Socioepidemiological information were gathered via a semi-structured questionnaire and blood samples were collected to obtain serum samples. Presence of anti-*Toxocara* spp. antibodies was screened by ELISA test. Uni and multivariate analyses were performed using the statistical software R to evaluate the relationship between seropositivity and associated variables. The presence of anti-*Toxocara* spp. antibodies was observed in 89/290 (30.7%; 95% CI: 25.7-36.2%) individuals. The multivariate analysis revealed that individuals who raised both dog and cat had three times higher odds for IgG seropositivity compared to those who declared not having any pet, while a higher educational level was a protective factor. No influence on the seropositivity was observed considering the other variables (age, gender, monthly income, consumption of drinkable water or raw/undercooked meat, having dirty floor at home, contact with soil, washing vegetables and hands before meals, onychophagy). In conclusion, toxocariasis is likely underreported and neglected in elderly population. Considering the seroprevalence observed herein in a group at risk of immunosenescence, this age group should be monitored. Furthermore, proper hygiene and regularly deworming of pets owned by elderly people need to be considered to reduce the risk of toxocariasis.

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